

Linguistic diversity and national unity: Sustainable demographic development of multi-ethnic population in Russia

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Abstract

© 2015, Mediterranean Center of Social and Educational Research. All rights reserved. The article exemplifies controversial features in the linguistic development of the multiethnic population of Russia in the Volga Federal District, predominantly in the Republic of Tatarstan¹; it analyzes the roles titular and official languages of the Russian Federation play in different spheres of life. The surveys held in Tatarstan over the last decade prove that enthusiasm of the ethnic 'Renaissance' of late 1990s has been changed by a disappointing estimation of Tatar still playing the role of a means of communication for a limited ethnic community, not viewed by the ethnic population as one of the main elements of their ethnic identity. There is evidence that failure to ensure the revival and intergenerational transmission of the Tatar language (one of the most developed in the Volga Federal Region and Russia) may accelerate negative demographic shifts and further reduction of the ethnic language functions. The authors consider the present situation in Tatarstan to be caused by the lack of language policy coordination on three levels: federal, local and individual (family). It is suggested that to ensure the ethnic and language reproduction in a federal state, language regulations initiatives are to be based on the concept of the languages being 'inherent property' of an ethnos, the most important qualitative characteristic of a state of the ethnos, and essential grounds for its existence and development. Sustainable ethno-linguistic reproduction and native languages preservation are viewed by the authors possible due to implementation of the idea of linguistic federalism and development of ethnic linguistic identity.

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Keywords

Identity, Language development, Linguistic federalism, Policy, Sustainable development